

to know that through our delegated representatives, in a meeting of rapt attention lasting until almost two o'clock in the morning, the House should have seen fit to endorse unanimously the other plan which provided for an intensive study of some of the major economic problems having to do with sickness, and by means of which it was hoped to place in possession of the Association reliable and comprehensive facts and figures on the subject; for use, if necessary, when the next California legislature convenes. Because our official spokesmen and representatives in the House of Delegates took that action, it is proper that every member of the California Medical Association should give to the Committee of Five (which is to be appointed: two members from the Council and three members from the House of Delegates*) every possible cooperation; for to such a platform of full cooperation, all must pledge themselves. * * *

Other Features of the Riverside Session.—Leaving now the domain of official business, it is of interest to know that the Riverside annual session was honored by the largest attendance thus far on record, a total of 1,618 registrations having been recorded.† The meetings were also remarkable because of the good fellowship so constantly in evidence. Much credit is due to Dr. W. W. Roblee's local committee on arrangements for its successful efforts in providing for the comforts and entertainment of visiting members. The Mission Inn headquarters, with its unique settings, to which hotel many members had the pleasure of making their first visit, was more than appreciated.

The meetings of the scientific sections were carried through in excellent fashion. Many of the papers will be printed during the coming year in CALIFORNIA AND WESTERN MEDICINE. The Community Health Meeting was the subject of much favorable comment.

Dr. George G. Reinle, Retiring President.—To the retiring president, Dr. George G. Reinle of Oakland, the thanks of the Association are extended for a year of efficient and active service. His efforts to place before many of the component county societies some of the problems confronting medical practice, and to enlist active interest therein from one end of this large and great state to the other, cannot result in other than good for organized medicine in California.

Dr. Clarence G. Toland, President.—To Dr. Clarence G. Toland, president until the California Medical Association meets in Yosemite National Park (probably in the latter part of May of 1935), go the pledges of whole-hearted support from all California Medical Association members.

* The Committee of Five on Study of Health Insurance Plans, as authorized by the House of Delegates is as follows: Chairman Kelly of the Council has appointed as the two Council members, Dr. Robert A. Peers of Colfax and Dr. Harry H. Wilson of Los Angeles; and Speaker Pallette of the House of Delegates has appointed as the three House members, Dr. Rodney A. Yoell and Dr. Alson R. Kilgore of San Francisco, and Dr. William R. Molony, Sr., of Los Angeles.

† The exact registration at the Riverside session was as follows: members, 1,157; guest physicians, 125; guests (technicians, nurses, etc.), 50; exhibitors, 44; members of Woman's Auxillary, 242. Total, 1,618.

He may be relied upon, we are sure, to give the best that is in him to continued further progress of the California Medical Association in every direction.

Dr. Robert A. Peers, President-Elect.—Greetings are also extended to the new president-elect, Dr. Robert A. Peers of Colfax. Doctor Peers, for many years, has been a faithful and valuable servant in organized and scientific medicine. He is an excellent example of that fine and sturdy type of physician so characteristic of smaller counties, where the responsibilities of daily practice test out the man. His past experience, and his personal qualities, lead all who know him to anticipate with confidence that he will carry forward, in splendid fashion, both the work begun by his predecessors and that of his own day.

So much for Riverside. If you would know more of what was done, (and you should), then take the time to scan the minutes of the Council and the House of Delegates; and with mind alert ask yourself what solutions appeal most to you for many of the problems which came up for consideration and which your delegates, acting for you, were called upon to decide.

BUBONIC PLAGUE IN CALIFORNIA RODENTS

Rodent Plague has existed in California since the Year 1900.—The above caption may not appeal to some of California's lay citizens, but sometimes the truth must be told, even though the telling hurts. In last month's CALIFORNIA AND WESTERN MEDICINE, page 381, some comments on "Bubonic Plague" were printed, and these included the following:

"... It is well to remember (skeptics to the contrary notwithstanding) that all scientific evidence shows that the *Bacillus pestis* has a wide distribution in the rodent population of California; and that, given suitable conditions—as happened in the Mexican district of Los Angeles several years ago—an outbreak of bubonic plague among human beings could easily take place."

When expression was given to that thought, the editor knew, but did not feel at liberty so to state, that in certain California counties there had been a flare-up of plague in the ground squirrel population; of such extent, indeed, that the California State Board of Health had deemed it necessary to notify all health officers and physicians of existing conditions, so that if a case of human plague infection did occur it would be the more promptly recognized, and the situation could at once be gotten into hand.

An Official Report on the Present Outbreak.—Perhaps as good a way as any to bring this important California public health problem to the attention of the medical profession (as well as to place the medical profession of the state squarely on record) will be to quote from the April, 1934, report of the Bureau of Sanitary Inspections, a copy of which is sent to each of the seven physicians who constitute the California State Board of Health; and since, at the last meeting of the

Board, the editor requested and received its sanction to give publicity to existing conditions, these excerpts are taken from the report of Bureau Chief Ross:

Plague Survey of Rodents.—During the month, plague survey activities were carried on in the northern part of Kern and the southern part of Tulare counties. The entire personnel of the Bureau, with the exception of one member who was on vacation, were engaged in this work.

On April 16, in accordance with instructions from the director, the services of one additional experienced rodent control officer were obtained. This man had been a member of our plague survey crew for several years, but was dropped from the pay roll on June 30, 1933, due to lack of funds. On April 20, also in accordance with instructions from the director, five additional men, experienced in this line of work, were engaged. Employment of these men was made necessary because of the virulent type of disease found to exist, the rapidity with which it was spreading and the large area apparently involved.

The force engaged in this work is divided into three crews—one operating in the southeast section of Tulare County, one in the northern part of Kern County, and the third—consisting of two men with a light car—investigating reports of unusual conditions in squirrel-infested areas, and conditions which exist in the vicinity.

With reference to rural schools, each school in the district was visited and the teachers informed as to the condition existing in the ground squirrels, and they were requested to warn all pupils of the danger in coming into contact with, or in handling, ground squirrels. Later visits to the schools show that these requests have been carefully complied with. The agricultural commissioners were requested to institute immediate control measures in the areas around schools and they have informed me that this request has been complied with. . . .

To date, practically the entire area under suspicion has been hunted over and it is thought that the boundaries of infected areas in both counties have been determined. Many suspicious rodents have been sent either to the state laboratory, the United States Public Health Service laboratory, San Francisco, or the laboratory of the Hooper Foundation for Medical Research at San Francisco. . . .

The following is a consolidated report of summary of operations in Kern, Tulare, Monterey, and San Luis Obispo counties:

Number of ranches hunted on	143
Number of cities and towns visited.....	21
Number of ranches visited.....	162
Total squirrels shot	3,185
(Sent to laboratory, 39; <i>positive</i> , 34)	
Total squirrels found dead (poisoned).....	72
Total squirrels found dead.....	2,400
(Sent to laboratory, 122; <i>positive</i> , 106)	
Total rats trapped	8
(Sent to laboratory, 1; <i>positive</i> , 0)	
Total rats found dead (poisoned).....	0
Total of other rodents collected.....	2
Total rodent postmortem examinations.....	5,304
Plague demonstrated in squirrels	140
Plague demonstrated in rats	0
Number of plague foci located.....	24
Squirrels shipped to laboratory and found negative	21
Rats shipped to laboratory and found negative.....	1

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Articles on Plague Which Have Been Printed in California and Western Medicine.—What is printed above, as taken from the files of the California State Board of Health, should be sufficient to show physicians, at least, that bubonic plague is no abstract or imaginary condition in California. In the May CALIFORNIA AND WESTERN MEDICINE, on page 365, is given a list of references to seventeen articles and items pertain-

ing to this matter which have been printed since 1927 in the official publication of the California Medical Association. This continued reference has not been by chance, but through intent to keep the subject alive and before the profession.* Concerning the outbreak in Los Angeles in 1924 (quoting from the November, 1927, CALIFORNIA AND WESTERN MEDICINE, page 685), we read:

"In all, there were thirty-two cases of pneumonic plague in this epidemic, of which thirty terminated fatally. There were ten persons living at the Samarano home at 742 Clara Street. Sixteen relatives and friends who visited the home during the illness of the first patient also developed pneumonic plague. Other contacts to develop the disease were the nurse, a Spanish priest, and the ambulance attendant. One case was not definitely traced. This patient was in *articulo mortis* at the time of admission to the hospital, and his friends could throw no light upon his whereabouts before being taken ill. . . .

"... So far as we have been able to ascertain, pneumonic epidemics have arisen as the result of earlier bubonic infections. . . .

"... In all, there were seven cases of bubonic plague in Los Angeles between October 24, 1924, and January 11, 1925. The symptoms were not to be distinguished from other cases of bubonic plague, but there are certain facts of particular interest. . . .

"... Early in the investigation it was learned from reliable sources that an epizootic of some nature had occurred among the rats in the district where plague first made its appearance. As evidence that such an epizootic did occur, it may be mentioned again that the first rat to be proved plague-infected was found in a dying condition in a grocery store one block from where the first human case occurred. Also, that the address where two cases of bubonic plague occurred is only a few blocks separated from the first focus of human and rodent plague, and dead rats were found beneath the floor of the home where the Anderson Street cases occurred. . . .

"... The study of our investigation leads us to the conclusion that the pneumonic epidemic was preceded by an epizootic among the rats some few weeks before the epidemic; that the first case of human plague to occur in the district was of bubonic type; that the pneumonic and the scattered bubonic cases were all of rat origin. We are reminded 'that rat fleas may be attracted to man, jump on him, but take some time to feed on him. This last observation is of importance in connection with the question of importation of infected fleas from place to place.' We are also of the opinion that in Los Angeles City and County the rat epizootic preceded, and was accountable for, the plague infection among the ground squirrels. . . ."

* * *

Coöperation Needed in This Emergency.—Need much more be said on the subject? In the face of such evidence, is it not most difficult to explain why the constituted authorities of so great a metropolitan center as the city of Los Angeles should be so reluctant (would "stubborn" be a better word?) to pass a rat-proofing building ordinance?

The California State Board of Health in this year 1934 has deemed it advisable to suggest the closing of certain schools in districts having an excess of plague-infected squirrels, hoping thereby to prevent some child picking up or contacting a dead and plague-infected squirrel, many of which have been found covered with fleas.

There is no desire in these comments to produce needless fear or to do harm to any of the State's interests. What is here written is given to

* See also article by Dr. Karl F. Meyer in this issue, on page 407.

keep the record of medicine clean, through advocacy of coöperation by state, county, and municipal authorities with representatives of the United States Public Health Service, so that all measures necessary to protect the public health may be properly instituted and carried through. If that is not done, it would seem to be only a matter of time until all California would again be forced to undergo plague experiences such as have already taken place in San Francisco and Los Angeles.

THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY HOSPITAL

A Thirteen-Million-Dollar Hospital Building.—A thirteen-million-dollar public hospital is something to talk about in both medical and lay circles. Such a single unit hospital structure, the largest of its kind in the world, has been erected by the taxpayers of Los Angeles County, and its official name is "The Acute Unit of the Los Angeles County Hospital." In this building several hundred members of the Los Angeles County Medical Association give to the many thousands of citizens who annually pass through its doors, as in- or out-patients, gratuitous service in medicine, surgery, and the specialties. These physicians and their predecessors have been giving such gratuitous service for many, many years. Now and then, patients have returned thanks to these kindly acting doctors; but since the majority of the patients come from the humbler walks of life, they probably think that all the members of the attending staff are being paid for their services. At least, such is the impression that is often gathered from conversations with the patients. It is a regrettable fact, but the attending physicians are not paid for the services so rendered on behalf of the county (a condition, unfortunately, true of other counties in California).

* * *

The Money Value of the Professional Services.—It has been estimated that the professional services of the attending staff members, when translated into money values even on a very modest fee table basis, approximate several million dollars yearly. Inasmuch as no money passes in the transaction, it is not of great import whether this be one, two or three millions a year; for it is still quite evident that an annual donation of one million dollars, given by a very small group of men to one of the richest counties in the United States, is nothing less than a massive donation.

* * *

Why Unappreciation Exists.—In this connection, one can forgive the lack of appreciation by some of the patients; because, after all, many of them do not possess the knowledge to understand what is being done for them. It is less easy, however, to pass over the well-to-do taxpayers and governing officials of the county, who can give no good reason for any such unappreciation. True it is, that the physicians themselves are in part to blame. It may be said of them that they have been so interested in the work to be done in the wards and clinics that they have given little, and often no thought to a consideration of what the public should know of the value of the professional work rendered in so large an institu-

tion. In this day in which we live, with its quite materialistic standards, such non-recognition of the worth of one's own work is promptly rewarded by equal unconcern on the part of those who should show appreciation; by which is meant, particularly, that large group of taxpayers to whom the annual donation of one or more millions of dollars of professional services is given. This characteristic loyalty of the medical profession to altruistic endeavor and to the profession's long traditions betokens a fine spirit of devoted service; but in our present era such indifference to self-interest and rights can become a real menace to both unselfish endeavor and to cherished beliefs and practices.

* * *

Annual Reports Should Be Printed by County Hospitals.—It seems logical, therefore, that the least that could be done by each county hospital of the State would be to annually print a record of the gratuitous professional work so done, with a statement of its money values, and then distribute such reports to the press and to all organizations interested in the public welfare. If such a procedure were the accepted rule, scientific medicine would find itself in possession of more friends than ever before; and a foundation could be laid thereon for a readjustment of this type of professional service, so that in time, perhaps, the taxpayers would feel that they really ought to pay for such service, just as they dispense for the food, medicines, and other material needs which are given to the patients.

* * *

The Dedication Addresses.—However, this line of thought is taking us afield from some comments on the massive building recently dedicated as the Acute Unit of the Los Angeles County Hospital. As indicated on page 402 of this issue, the dedication address was by Dr. Percy Magan of Los Angeles. Another speaker of the day was Dr. John Barrow, whose remarks as a representative of the staff are printed on page 406. In the Miscellany Department (on page 475) are given some descriptive text and other data concerning this new building. Members of the profession should scan these articles, because they deal with matters having an intimate relation to medical practice in California.

* * *

The Record of the Medical Profession Is Clear.—At this time we do not wish to discuss in any detail the merits or demerits of the imposing structure, some of the various features of which do not appeal to many physicians. There can be no question that much money was ill-advisedly spent. However, as to all this, the record of the attending staff is clear, since numerous and vigorous, though unavailing, protests by the staff representatives were duly made and registered.*

*References to other articles on the Los Angeles County Hospital which have been printed in CALIFORNIA AND WESTERN MEDICINE are as follows:

Vol. XXXII, No. 2, February, 1930, page 117—Editorial.
Vol. XXXII, No. 3, March, 1930, page 193—Editorial.
Vol. XXXIV, No. 5, May, 1931, page 376—Editorial.
Vol. XXXIV, No. 6, June, 1931, page 420—Editorial.
Vol. XXXV, No. 2, August, 1931, page 133—Editorial.
Vol. XXXVII, No. 1, July, 1932, page 69—Miscellany, News.
Vol. XL, No. 1, January, 1934, page 58—Editorial.
Vol. XL, No. 1, January, 1934, page 70—Miscellany, News.